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COMMON TOUCH: THE ART OF THE SENSES IN THE HISTORY OF THE BLIND
New exhibition by artist Teresa Jaynes explores the nature of perception
Opens at the Library Company on April 4

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – March 15, 2016 – The Library Company presents a major new exhibition entitled *Common Touch: The Art of the Senses in the History of the Blind*. Organized by the library's [Visual Culture Program \(VCP at LCP\)](#) and curated by artist-in-residence Teresa Jaynes, the exhibition is inspired by the Library Company's Michael Zinman Collection of Printing for the Blind. By juxtaposing her multisensory artwork with historical materials documenting the education of the visually impaired in the 19th century, Jaynes explores the nature, foundations, and limits of perception. *Common Touch* is on view April 4–October 21, 2016, Monday–Friday, 9 am to 4:45 pm.

Common Touch will immerse visitors into a world of discovery in which history intersects with new forms of tactile expression. Complemented by 19th-century personal narratives, raised-print textbooks, and teaching tools of the visually impaired, Jaynes' original works will challenge our cultural assumptions about the interrelationship between art, sight, and the history of disability. Exhibition visitors will be invited to touch displays that range from a topographic map with porcelain geometric forms that represent the travels of a prominent 18th-century English blind surveyor to movable, sculptural letters after the handwriting of a blind woman corresponding with a benefactor in the late 19th-century. Other installations submerge visitors into a cocoon of sound and scent conveying a micro-narrative of the life of Victorian blind musician Thomas "Blind Tom" Wiggins. A series of silkscreen printed patterns representing a visual translation of Wiggins's noted composition *March Timpani* (1880), an artist book of raised prints after embossed diagrams of snowflakes in the Perkins School for the Blind adaptation of the science text *The Rudiments of Natural Philosophy* (1845), and an 1838 edition from the first American raised-print periodical *The Students' Magazine* (1838-1845) will also be discovered in the innovative exhibition.

The exhibition will be accompanied by several public programs, including a performance of Terry Galloway's comic, moving, and sometimes profane one-woman show *You Are My Sunshine – A Kind of Love Story*; a discussion with award-winning author Stephen Kuusisto on blind history and its place in art; and a jazz concert by New Orleans pianist and vocalist Henry Butler and Philadelphia's master percussionist Pablo Batista.

For more information about the exhibition and its accompanying programming, visit commontouch.librarycompany.org. *Common Touch* has been supported by [The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage](#). Partners include Art-Reach, Demeter Fragrance Library, Inc., the Gershman Y, Institute on Disabilities at Temple University, Monell Chemical Senses Center, Philly Touch Tours, and Philly Jazz Project initiative. Media sponsorship has been generously provided by WHYY.

Teresa Jaynes

For more than 25 years, Teresa Jaynes has created installations and artists' books based on extensive research in special collections and libraries. She is a recipient of a Pew Fellowship in the Arts, as well as grants from the Independence Foundation, Art Matters, National Endowment for the Arts, and Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Jaynes received her BFA from the University of Texas at Austin and her MFA from Tyler School of Art, Temple University. She has exhibited her work in New York, Chicago,

Minneapolis, and Philadelphia, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Institute of Contemporary Art, and The Rosenbach Museum & Library.

Visual Culture Program (VCP) at the Library Company of Philadelphia

Launched in 2008, VCP at LCP promotes the use of historical images as primary sources for studying the past and fosters research, collection, and interpretation of historic visual material. Scholars and the general public are increasingly aware of the importance of visual images in examining the past. With the proliferation of sophisticated digitization technologies, researchers now have the opportunity to "see" images in new ways. No longer considered secondary to text, visual materials are taking their rightful place as primary evidence documenting the past and influencing our understanding of the present. Through exhibitions, research fellowships, conferences, and public programs, VCP at LCP promotes the creative use of the Library Company's varied collections of visual materials.

The Library Company of Philadelphia

Founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin, The Library Company of Philadelphia is an independent research library specializing in American history and culture from the 17th through the 19th centuries. The Library Company is America's oldest cultural institution and served as the Library of Congress from the Revolutionary War to 1800. It was the largest public library in America until the Civil War and includes the extensive personal libraries of such prominent early American bibliophiles as James Logan. Open to the public free of charge, the Library Company houses an extensive collection of rare books, manuscripts, broadsides, ephemera, prints, photographs, and works of art, and one of the world's largest holdings of early American imprints. Particular strengths of the collection include economic history, women's history, African American history, history of medicine, history of philanthropy, and visual culture. The Library Company promotes access to these collections through fellowships, exhibitions, programs, and online resources. To find out more, please visit www.librarycompany.org.

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